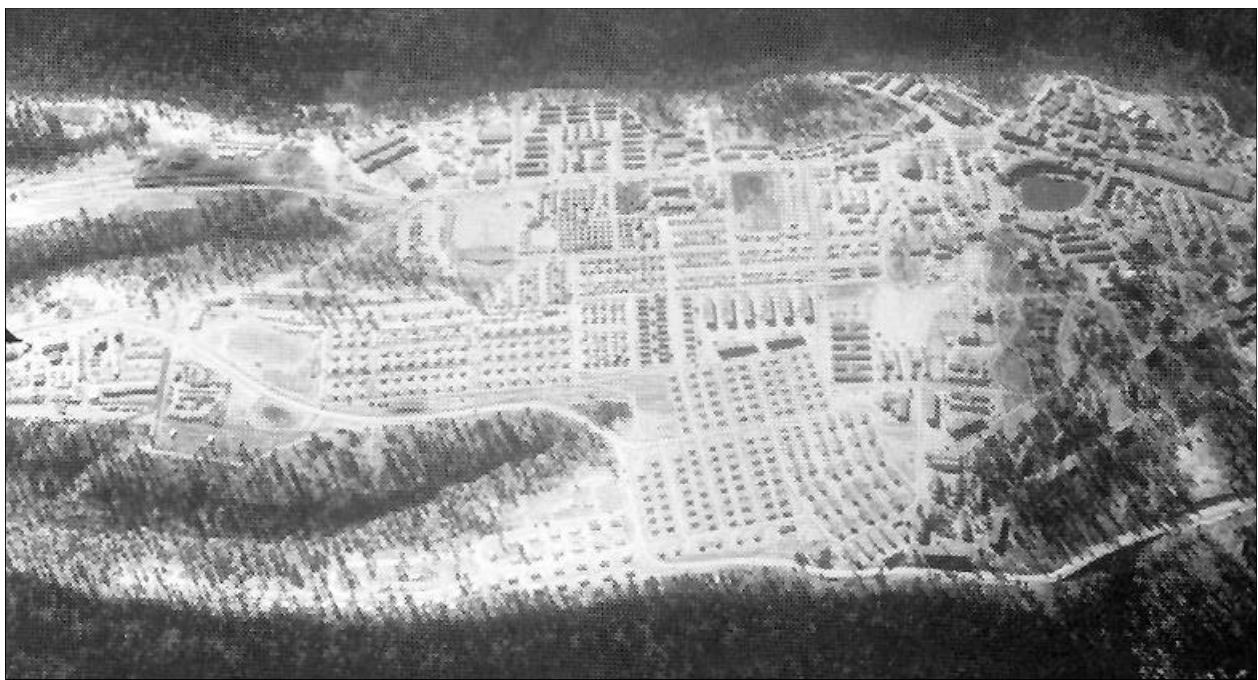


"The world we have created today as a result of our thinking thus far has problems which cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them."
- Albert Einstein



a.



b.



c.



d.



e.



f.



g.

- a. AERIAL VIEW OF LOS ALAMOS IN 1946
- b. LOS ALAMOS CANYON AND THE JEMEZ MOUNTAINS
- d. LOS ALAMOS CANYON AND BRIDGE
- d. TRINITY DRIVE
- e. ASHLEY POND
- f. VIEW WEST OVER LOS ALAMOS AND THE VALLES CALDERA
- g. THE REGIONAL CONTEXT OF LOS ALAMOS

A. INTRODUCTION

1. WHY A NEW MASTER PLAN?

PRESENT DAY DOWNTOWN LOS ALAMOS WAS BORN FROM THE PRESSING NEEDS OF THE Manhattan Project, laying on a challenging and beautiful site the rough grid of a temporary military town. Even with this minimal degree of planning and the temporary nature of many buildings, the town plan worked as a place due to its compactness. Many early residents of that time speak fondly of the sense of community that was forged by everyday casual contact. Most people could walk for their daily needs, or at least park once and walk to more than one store or civic building. This gave citizens a sense of belonging, not only to a place, but to each other, as people with a common purpose.

Over the years, this compactness has been lost, primarily through suburban zoning codes imported from elsewhere. These codes have allowed the Downtown to sprawl so that it is no longer mixed in use, compact and walkable. Whereas a traditional town center is defined by storefronts facing short and relatively narrow streets, wide thoroughfares and buildings surrounded by parking lots compose Downtown Los Alamos. A chaotic pattern of traffic moves across and from parking lot to parking lot; one third of the car trips today on Trinity Drive are by people driving from one store to another within the Downtown. As a consequence, 70% of the area of Downtown is covered by blacktop. The suburban codes responsible for this percentage discourage the creation of housing, parkspace and physical connections that seem both appropriate to and would capitalize upon Los Alamos' "island" location within the stunning natural beauty of the Pajarito Plateau.

The purpose of this Master Plan is to restore Downtown as a coherent, special place in the heart of Los Alamos. How can a Master Plan change the present condition of underutilized land, declining retail activity and a loss of community? It must stimulate the longer presence of a critical mass of people in the Downtown as well as easier access to and navigation through it. The primary instrument is the design and adoption of a new development code. Rather than zoning which strictly separates uses and requires excessive parking for each individual business, this new urbanist development code encourages the design of compatible buildings that incorporate a mix of uses and share parking. Such buildings promote the walkability and compactness necessary for a true Town Center to emerge. The Master Plan consists of a Development Strategy, Civic Infrastructure Design Recommendations (Parks and Streetscapes, Pedestrian First and Park Once), and a Regulating Plan with standards for each building (Use, Urban Regulations, Architectural Types, and Architectural Regulations).

The Regulating Plan also defines the physical characteristics of all proposed new right of ways, along with an indication of building frontages and building types on each block. This ensures the orderly, incremental growth of the town center, one building at a time.

The primary catalytic projects are explored in the section Illustrative Development Potential. The four main project areas - Civic Center, Main Street, East End, South Rim - are illustrated in detail for a 10 and 20 year timeframe of development. This section shows one possible execution of the Master Plan; there are many alternatives, depending on the sequence and degree of public and private involvement. Following this, there is a recommended order of Implementation. Finally, the Appendix presents the history of Los Alamos, and an analysis of existing conditions.

The Master Plan presents the current options facing Los Alamos in a clear light - either continued stagnation and sprawl or a compact, vital Town Center that citizens can once again cherish as their own.